

Faith, vision and wisdom. The beginnings of Christ Church.

The years leading up to the start of the Great War in 1914, were boom years for Calgary. It had grown from 11,967 in 1906 to 60,502 in 1911 and Elbow Park had been annexed in **1906**.

The Diocese Of Calgary had been formed in **1888**, and Cyprian Pinkham, the first bishop, was still in office. The nearest Anglican church was St Stephens, on 14th Avenue SW.

In **1911**, 40 families had the ***faith and vision*** to petition the bishop to erect a church in Elbow Park, on land donated by Fred Lowes, the main developer in this area. In **1912**, the year of the first Stampede, Bishop Pinkham established the new parish, setting out its boundaries and named Canon Hogbin as interim rector.

An inaugural congregational meeting was soon held at "Lowestoft", the home of Mr and Mrs Lowes, which was beside the Elbow River, with Canon Hogbin in the chair. Mr W.P. Hibbert was appointed Rector's Warden by Canon Hogbin. Major AG Wolley Dodd was voted People's Warden. In addition, eight vestry members were elected. It was decided to call the new parish "Christ Church".

The first vestry meeting quickly followed, still in August 1912 and asked the bishop to appoint Rev Charles Horne as the first rector, who took up his appointment on Dec 1st, with a minimum salary of \$100 per month.

Monthly meetings of vestry followed, initially at "Lowestoft", then at parishioners' homes and at the church after May '13. Minutes have been preserved from the very first meeting. Annual parish meetings began in January '14, with annual appointment of wardens, vestry and synod delegates. Annual Financial statements and reports from parish organizations were presented from that date.

The first vestry meeting appointed the firm of Laing and Major as Architects for a new church. A conceptual drawing of the proposed church was presented by the architects, which would cost about \$80,000, which we still have. It was decided, in spite of the boom times to start small, on a phased creation of a less ambitious church, one then estimated to eventually cost \$40,000,

The first phase would be the eastern 1/3 of the church basement. This was drawn up by the architects and put out to tender. The job of constructing the building was awarded to The Swanstrom Co for \$7,728. It was substantially completed by Christmas and had a capacity of 160 people.

The first service was on held on January 5th 1913, before a congregation of 40-50 people. There was initially no heat, but someone donated a wood and coal stove and natural gas was shortly piped-in. We believe that was Morning prayer, which would have continued weekly, as the backbone of worship life, but in February '14, an evening service at 7pm is recorded. In Oct '14, the Very Rev Dean Paget of the Pro-cathedral preached at Harvest thanksgiving services.

What is an Anglican worship service without music? Just after the first service, an organ was purchased for \$106.25. A choir was organized, which soon included boys. Women and girls were not allowed in those early days. The first organist and choir master, Carolyn Sells was appointed, but she died in Dec'13 and the congregation helped her sister with medical expenses- \$35 towards Hospital and \$15 towards nurse.

Even before the church opened, there were essential clerical functions, like handling donations to the building fund, and paying the Rector. They could not afford a secretary and this work was done by volunteers. Someone organized insurance of \$1000 on the contents of the church.

Flyers announcing first service were distributed in Glencoe and EP and by Jan '14, notices were being published in the Saturday Herald. A Sunday service sheet was likely soon started, which would have included some parish news. A monthly report by Rector was soon considered but deferred, due to cost and then Mr Baltram planned a Parish magazine.

The support of the congregation was essential to run the new parish. There would have been no system of paying regularly, independently of one's attendance, so collections during Sunday services were crucial. Initially, a hat would have been passed around. Pledge envelopes were soon printed and by Dec'13, \$ 947 had been collected.

Publishers of *Church life* gave some money and carol singing by Miss Sells and three others, in Dec '13 also raised money. The Womens' Auxiliary (WA), later to become the ACW, was formed in 1914 and immediately assumed great importance for fundraising. They undertook various fund-raising events, such as concerts with refreshments, and sales of handiwork. In 1914, a Junior WA had been organized and it raised \$50.

The church's role to support the disadvantaged arose right away. In Jan 1914, \$118 had been raised for 'Missions'.

The church must have been instantly successful, because by May '13, the Rector was calling for more space. He noted that St Marks was scheduled to open soon on 33rd Ave and "we need to hold what we have". In **May 1914**, a special vestry meeting called for tenders for a Westerly extension to the basement. An additional 1/3 of the anticipated final basement structure, or four more bays, was built that summer, by parishioner W.H. Cawston, at a cost of \$6080. The. By then the whole church was heated by Natural Gas stoves. Its walls were encased in brick and a tar and gravel roof added, during the next two years.

The early leadership showed great **wisdom** in doing the building project in small steps, because in 1914, the First World War, began and the economy went into recession. Thus, various mortgages and loans had to be arranged during the first few years, at interest rates around 6%, with personal guarantees by vestry members. The war lasted until 1918 and Christ Church would remain a basement church until **1921**.

Fred Lowes, had given the lot on which the church stands today. The rest of our land, to the South, was obtained in the 1950, by donation and purchase. The building had been constructed under a hill, and the lot had a gentle slope and was covered by original prairie grass. Mention was made in the vestry minutes of clearing of scrub and levelling it. The hillside had been excavated and graded, just before the first church was built, to make way for 34th Ave and 8th St. Some problems arose with water drainage off the hill, but 8th St caught most of it. There were no natural trees in Elbow Park then, except down by the River. Later, in 1921, the church planted trees on the hillside above the church, to stabilize the hillside soil.

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